

Lake County Building Department receives award for excellence

BY MARIAN MCMAHON

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LAKE COUNTY – Hard work is supposed to be its own reward, but it is still good to be recognized for one's efforts. The Lake County Board of Commissioners commended David Strichko, the county's chief building official, and his staff, for receiving the 2016 David A. Smith, Jr. Award for Building Department Excellence at the Dec. 29 meeting.

The award was based on a review of the different nominated departments' performance, contacting building contractors and conducting "secret shopper" calls to the departments.

"In the last 18 months, our building department has done a complete and utter turnaround and I'm so very proud of them," Commissioner Judy Moran said. "They have come so far in the last few months. They have extended the hours, changed the hours, and the morale down there is just unprecedented, so I want to thank you for everything you've done."

Strichko said it would be an honor for any department to receive the award for high standards so he was proud to receive it. He said a sign in his office which states, "Help, not hinder," serves as the office motto.

"In the mid-summer of 2015, the department went through sort of an abrupt change," Strichko said.



PHOTO BY MARIAN MCMAHON

Lake County commissioners, Dan Troy, left, Judy Moran and Kevin Malecek, right, present a certificate of recognition Dec. 29 to Patrick Barnes, Rose Ann Kundtz and CBO David Strichko of the Lake County Building Department for receiving the 2016 David A. Smith, Jr. Award for Building Department Excellence.

"Through that change, two people—Patrick Barnes and Rose Ann Kundtz—stayed on and kind of weathered the storm. There was a lot of stress at that time, but they still stuck with it, looking for a brighter future and I believe that without them sticking around, this department would not be what it is today, so for that I thank you."

He also complimented the others who joined the department and worked so hard to improve things when the department had been "stripped to the bones": Jeff Cook, Phillip Nelson, Rebecca Mackey and Sue McCarthy.

Strichko offered thanks to Richard Smith, retired chief building inspector for Willoughby, for stepping in to head the department temporarily, until he, Strichko, took over. Smith still provides information as needed.

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"Karen White from fleet maintenance, Donna Tyson from the commissioners' office and Ann Myers from planning—they were kind of swept out of their departments," he said. "They came to the aid of the Building Department in its transition and helped keep the Building Department running (despite having little or no experience with the Building Department operations). They did a great job, and without them, it would have been complete chaos."

Strichko thanked County Administrator Jason Boyd, Director of Administrative Services Joel DiMare and the Lake County Prosecutor's Office for putting up with him. He said they all

responded promptly to all requests and questions with respect.

He further thanked the Lake County Board of Commissioners for their trust and support, Budget Director Mike Matas for helping with the budget, and all the department heads for working with him to improve communications with the people the Building Department serves.

"Finally, to the people who nominated us—the builders, the residents, the local business, local organizations like the Home Builders Association—without them recognizing us to the state, the state would not have known what we're doing, and we would not have been recognized," Strichko said. "So, to them I say thank you."